

# Extensive support services designed to assist IA families

## PART 3:

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Dealing with the separation and hardship associated with a routine six-month deployment can be difficult. But for individual augmentee (IA) Sailors and their families, the difference between those routine deployments they may have become accustomed to over the years and a non-traditional expeditionary deployment can be tremendous.

Currently, more than 8,300 active duty Sailors and mobilized Navy reservists are deployed throughout the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism. IA Sailors serve in “boots on the ground” billets with Army and U.S. Marine Corps. units in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar, the Horn of Africa, South America and many other locations.

IA Sailors are assigned to missions that last from six to 18 months, which only begin after basic combat and mission-related training, and a pre-deployment process that may be from two to nine months. Afterward, the post-deployment transition process can take six to 12 months. In all, an IA Sailor and their family may be considered to be in the IA pipeline from a year to more than three years.

To assist IA Sailors and their families to handle any issues of non-traditional deployments, many agencies have come together to provide support. A primary source of support for any Navy family, and especially for IA families, is the Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC).

A multitude of FFSC programs and services have been developed specifically for IA Sailors and their families to address before, during and after deployment issues. These include the IA Deployment Readiness Brief, individual deployment readiness counseling sessions, family discussion groups, virtual discussion groups, the Returning from Non-Traditional Deployment workshop, counseling services and IA/GSA deployment support specialists.

“In the beginning, we had to understand why this deployment is different,” explained Colleen Charlton, chief of services for FFSC at Naval Air Station Oceana. “We looked at the different things associated with preparing to go, the war zone during the deployment, and what was different about coming back. So we developed the IA Pre-Deployment Readiness and the Returning from Non-Traditional Deployment briefs. Then we moved on to how the families were affected and began the IA discussion groups for spouses to help them figure out what’s different for them and what they need in terms of support and resources.”

As a result of the assessment, Charlton said FFSCs began staffing counselors for children who might be affected by the length of separation, as well as deal with the fear they might have about their parent deploying. Although designed to assist children with IA-related issues, the counselors are available to address any issue a military child may have. In terms of adult counseling, services are available for any reason an IA Sailor or their family might seek it. According to Charlton, more couples seek services for marital issues than for any other reason.

FFSC IA programs are conducted in concert with other agencies, including U.S. Fleet Forces Command, which acts as the Executive Agent for the IA Continuum, the Navy Mobilization Processing Sites, and the Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC) at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, which has the mission of providing proactive support for IA families.

“Just like any fleet command, we cannot alone take care of our Sailors and IA families without regional support in which Fleet and Family Support Center is an integral part,” said Capt. Jeffrey L. McKenzie, ECRC commanding officer. “We work closely with regional Fleet and Family staff by providing information to them to help build their programs for ombudsman and IA deployment workshops.”

The schedule for the IA workshops and briefs, and any other FFSC offers, can be found on the FFSC website at [www.ffscnorva.navy.mil](http://www.ffscnorva.navy.mil). Many resources are available through the



Heather Martin, an individual deployment support specialist at Naval Air Station Oceana's Fleet and Family Support Center, presents an IA Family Handbook to a spouse during an individual deployment readiness counseling session.



Mark McDaniel, a Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) deployment specialist, facilitates the Individual Augmentee (IA) Deployment Readiness Brief for IA Sailors, which covers personal, practical and financial preparation; community resources; communicating with family and coping skills.



NCC John Jeffries from Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 121 and his wife, Latisha, review materials from the IA Deployment Readiness Brief at the Naval Station Norfolk's Fleet and Family Support Center. During his IA tour, Jeffries will be deployed to Iraq.

website under the IA section, including IA Sailor and IA Family handbooks; referral phone numbers and Web site; and links to register for the workshops and briefs.

Another important service offered through FFSC is personal contact with the families by individual deployment support specialists (IDSSs) throughout each phase of the deployment, which is performed with the help of NFAAS.

NFAAS, the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System, was developed by Task Force Navy Family following the major hurricane season of 2005. Through the database, Navy leadership can track the status and needs of families after an emergency or catastrophic event. Since the system was initially established, an IA module has been added to ensure accurate contact information is available regarding each IA family.

Heather Martin, an IDSS at the Naval Air Station Oceana FFSC, along with Beverly Conrad, another Oceana IDSS, contacts IA families in Hampton Roads and explains the resources available to help handle concerns during their Sailor's deployment.

“We work from the NFAAS system,” Martin said. “Each week, Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) enters into the database the information of the family members who are just entering the IA pipeline. We receive the cases for the entire Mid-Atlantic region. I assign the cases outside Hampton Roads to the appropriate case manager at Fleet and Family Support Centers in that area, and Beverly and I share the caseload for Hampton Roads IA families.”

Navy Region Mid-Atlantic is one of five such regions across the United States. Currently, the case load Martin and Conrad share consists of more than 1,600 IA families.

“NFAAS gives us a list of families to contact every day,” Martin explained. “We contact each family when they are added to the system for that initial contact call. We explain the services we can provide, make sure their information in the system is accurate and determine how often they want to be contacted. Then we call them periodically after that. Most families prefer a once-a-month e-mail to check on them, with about 15 out of my 800 families requesting weekly contact.”

Between the two, they contact between 50 and 80 families per day, depending on the list provided by NFAAS.

“I love and enjoy contacting the families,” Martin said. “Many want more resources, especially those we can send out through e-mails.”

The information sent via email primarily consists of the CNIC monthly newsletter, SIGNAL, which is the FFSC upcoming schedule, and a listing of upcoming special events, like those sponsored by the United Service Organization or Morale, Welfare

and Recreation. According to Martin, about 25 to 30 percent of families request financially-related resources, mostly concerning budgeting and the Thrift Savings Plan.

Martin said she could not do her job without IA Sailors and families understanding the importance of keeping their information updated – including phone numbers, mailing addresses and commercial email addresses. Information can be updated in the NFAAS system through either the IA Sailor or a family member logging onto <https://navyfamily.navy.mil>. Family members

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ground”	billet	s w	ith	Arm y	and
U. S.	Marine	Corps	units.		

should select the NFAAS-Navy Family Member tab and enter the social security and birth date of the member. Update family information under the My Info tab.

One of the resources Martin and Conrad send to their clients, the CNIC Family Connection newsletter, is a valuable tool dedicated to supporting the IA family throughout the IA Continuum. The monthly newsletter covers topics such as family readiness, children and deployments, virtual meetings online and homecomings. The newsletter can be found on CNIC's FFSC page at <https://www.cnic.navy.mil/mid-south/Families/index.htm>.

Staying updated with the latest information is beneficial for IA families, especially those who have moved while their Sailor is deployed and who may not be close to a military base. A great resource for these and any military family is Military OneSource, which supplements existing family programs. Initiated in 2004 by the Department of Defense, Military OneSource provides information ranging from everyday concerns to deployment-related issues. Through the Web site and a worldwide, 24-hour, seven-day-a-week information and referral telephone service, active duty, Reserve and National Guard military members and their families, as well as deployed civilians and their families, are eligible to use the service.

For family members who require face-to-face counseling, Military OneSource can provide a referral to professional civilian counselors at no cost. Lt. Jim Frey, IA coordinator for Helicopter Sea Combat Wing Atlantic at Naval Station Norfolk, said Military OneSource is a great resource for counseling services.

“All counselors who answer the phone have master's degrees or high-

er, and they can put family members in contact with counselors within 30 miles of any location throughout the United States,” Frey explained.

In addition, Military OneSource offers information on a variety of topics and issues. Users may also use the web site to order educational materials (booklets, CDs, etc.) at no charge and access consultants online. To contact Military OneSource, visit [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com) or call (800) 342-9647.

Military OneSource is not the only hotline IA families can call. ECRC operates a 24-hour toll-free family hotline for IA family emergencies at (877) 364-4302. IA families may also contact the ECRC IA Family Helpdesk at [ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil](mailto:ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil) for help with general questions. ECRC has access to a diversified network of resources and programs that have been set in place to assist IA Sailors and their families as they progress through any part of the IA Continuum. One of the many resources available to help alleviate concerns is provided by ECRC's Family Readiness Department which acts as a conduit for information and resource referral for IA families.

Another effective asset to the IA family is the command ombudsman, who serves as the primary communication link between the families and the command, and the channel of official information from the command to the families.

“As ombudsman coordinator, it is my responsibility to oversee the training of ombudsman, as well as act as a resource and sounding board for them,” explained Pat Henderson, om-

budsman coordinator at the Naval Air Station Oceana FFSC. “We have added an IA module to the training that focuses on what is different for the IA family and the resources available specifically for IA families. In addition to new resources, we also are using some of the same resources but in a different way, especially for those who are living in remote not near military bases.”

One of these differences is the requirement for ombudsman to contact IA families monthly. Henderson said this is the responsibility of the ombudsman from the command the IA Sailor was attached to before the deployment, regardless if they are IA or GSA Sailors.

“Family members build up a relationship with their Sailor's command,” Henderson said. “So they can feel more connected when the ombudsman from that command, as well as command members, continue to keep in touch with them during their spouse's deployment. They can reach out to them and let them know what's going on.”

Henderson said in the past year, about 20 percent of ombudsman going through the training have had their spouse complete an IA deployment, and may have a better understanding of how to assist the families of IA Sailors.

For families who may not be sure who their ombudsman is, they can contact any of the six FFSCs in the region. Ombudsmen coordinators, as well as the local IDSSs, maintain a roster of names and phone numbers of the ombudsman for each command in the area.

IA families can use any of these resources to assist them in handling any issue that may develop during an IA deployment.

### IA FAMILY RESOURCES:

**Fleet and Family Support Center**  
[www.ffscnorva.navy.mil](http://www.ffscnorva.navy.mil)  
(800) FSC-LINE (372-5463)  
or 444-NAVY (6289)

**Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center**  
Emergency hotline:  
(877) 364-4302  
Helpdesk email:  
[ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil](mailto:ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil)

**Military OneSource**  
[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)  
(800) 342-9647

**Navy Family Accounting Assessment System**  
<https://navyfamily.navy.mil>

**CNIC Monthly Newsletter**  
<https://www.cnic.navy.mil/mid-south/Families/index.htm>

**Military Family Network**  
[www.emilitary.org](http://www.emilitary.org)

**Navy Family Community Discussion Board**  
<https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil/portal/home>

**Naval Services FamilyLine**  
[www.lifelines.navy.mil/familyline/index.htm](http://www.lifelines.navy.mil/familyline/index.htm)

**Spiritual Fitness Center Mid-Atlantic (CREDO)**  
[www.cnrma.navy.mil/staff/credo.htm](http://www.cnrma.navy.mil/staff/credo.htm)  
(444) 7654/1091

**National Military Family Association**  
[www.nmfa.org](http://www.nmfa.org)  
(800) 905-4675

**Military Homefront**  
[www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil)

**Operation Homefront**  
[www.operationhomefront.net](http://www.operationhomefront.net)